

March 28, 2008

Member of the California State Legislature
C/O Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr.
California State Capitol
Room 5016
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Legislator:

I am asking you to support Assembly Bill 2124 (Beall). The bill would enable California counties to receive additional federal revenue to perform Screening and Brief Interventions (SBI) for expectant mothers and women in their child-bearing years.

Prenatal exposure to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs can severely damage the development, structure and functioning of the fetal brain. Yet, 1 in 12 pregnant women nationwide report drinking alcohol. Proper prevention, intervention and screening can reduce the needless suffering of parents and the long-term damage of a child, while significantly reducing long-term healthcare, and special education costs. Research shows primary care screening can effectively identify people susceptible to serious alcohol or other drug problems. The screenings and their questions are quick, non-intrusive and can easily be incorporated into the first prenatal visit and following appointments.

In January 2007, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) made it easier for providers to get reimbursed for alcohol and drug abuse Screening and Brief Intervention (SBI) services. California has not tapped this new federal revenue source but many counties have chosen to provide these services for pregnant women and adversely affected children. Services not covered by Medical are passed onto the counties' general fund so either way the families will be served. The question is, "what is the best and most cost effective way to serve these families?" Our view is prevention is best..

This bill sets up a voluntary program to let counties provide the State's required 50% share of cost to obtain a one-to-one match in federal dollars. At a time when the State is in a fiscal crisis and critical health programs are being cut, California can not afford to turn away federal funds. The bill means more money for California counties to provide SBI and help mothers give birth to healthy babies. For all of these reasons, I urge you to voice your support for AB 2124.

Best regards,

Name
Address

